



Latin America: Terrorism Issues

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September 2, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RS21049

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 02 SEP 2009		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Latin America: Terrorism Issues				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC, 20540-7500				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 14	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Summary

Since the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, U.S. attention to terrorism in Latin America has intensified, with an increase in bilateral and regional cooperation. In its April 2009 Country Reports on Terrorism, the State Department maintained that terrorism in the region was primarily perpetrated by terrorist organizations in Colombia and by the remnants of radical leftist Andean groups. Overall, however, the report maintained that the threat of a transnational terrorist attack remained low for most countries in the hemisphere. Cuba has remained on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1982 pursuant to Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act, which triggers a number of economic sanctions. Both Cuba and Venezuela are on the State Department's annual list of countries determined to be not cooperating fully with U.S. antiterrorism efforts pursuant to Section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act. U.S. officials have expressed concerns over the past several years about Venezuela's lack of cooperation on antiterrorism efforts, its relations with Iran, and President Hugo Chávez's sympathetic statements for Colombian terrorist groups. The State Department terrorism report noted, however, that President Chávez publicly changed course in June 2008 and called on the FARC to unconditionally release all hostages, declaring that armed struggle is "out of place" in modern Latin America.

In recent years, U.S. concerns have increased over activities of the radical Lebanon-based Islamic group Hezbollah and the Sunni Muslim Palestinian group Hamas in the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. The State Department terrorism report maintains that the United States remains concerned that Hezbollah and Hamas sympathizers are raising funds among the sizable Middle Eastern communities in the region, but stated that there was no corroborated information that these or other Islamic extremist groups had an operational presence in the area. Allegations have linked Hezbollah to two bombings in Argentina: the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 30 people and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. Concerns about Iran's increasing activities in Latin America center on the country's ties to Hezbollah and the terrorist attacks in Argentina.

In the 111th Congress, the following initiatives have been considered or introduced related to Latin American terrorism issues. On June 10, 2009, the House approved H.R. 2410 (Berman), the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for FY2010 and FY2011, with a provision calling for a report on Iran's and Hezbollah's actions in the Western Hemisphere. On July 17, 2009, the House approved H.Con.Res. 156 (Ros-Lehtinen) that, among other provisions, condemns the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires, and urges Western Hemisphere governments to take actions to curb the activities that support Hezbollah and other such extremist groups. On July 23, 2009, the Senate approved its version of the FY2010 defense authorization bill, S. 1390 (Levin) that includes a reporting requirement on Venezuela regarding support for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and Hezbollah. Introduced measures include: H.R. 375 (Ros-Lehtinen), introduced January 9, 2009, which has the goal of bolstering capacity and cooperation of Western Hemisphere countries in order to counter current and emerging threats, promote Western Hemisphere cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and secure universal adherence to agreements regarding nuclear proliferation; and H.R. 2272 (Rush), introduced May 6, 2009, which includes a provision that would remove Cuba from the state sponsors of terrorism list.

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Terrorism in Latin America: U.S. Concerns

Over the years, the United States has been concerned about threats to Latin American and Caribbean nations from various terrorist or insurgent groups that have attempted to influence or overthrow elected governments. Although Latin America has not been the focal point in the war on terrorism, countries in the region have struggled with domestic terrorism for decades and international terrorist groups have at times used the region as a battleground to advance their causes.

The State Department's annual *Country Reports on Terrorism* highlights U.S. concerns about terrorist threats around the world, including in Latin America. The April 2009 report maintained that terrorism in the region was primarily perpetrated by terrorist organizations in Colombia and by the remnants of radical leftist Andean groups. Overall, however, the report maintained that the threat of a transnational terrorist attack remained low for most countries in the hemisphere.

The report also stated that regional governments "took modest steps to improve their counterterrorism capabilities and tighten border security" but that progress was limited by "corruption, weak government institutions, ineffective or lack of interagency cooperation, weak or non-existent legislation, and reluctance to allocate sufficient resources." The report lauded counterterrorism efforts in Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Paraguay, Mexico, and El Salvador, but noted that some other countries "lacked urgency and resolve to address counterterrorism deficiencies." It also noted that most hemispheric nations had solid cooperation with the United States on terrorism issues, especially at the operational level, with excellent intelligence, law enforcement, and legal assistance relations.

Colombia

Colombia has three terrorist groups that have been designated by the Secretary of State as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs): the leftist National Liberation Army (ELN), and remaining elements of the rightist paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The ELN has a dwindling membership of about 2,000 fighters and reduced offensive capability, but has inflicted casualties through the increased use of land mines and continues to fund its operations through drug trafficking. Peace talks between the ELN and the Colombian government remain stalled. With more than 32,000 members demobilized, the AUC remained inactive as a formal organization, but some AUC renegades continued to engage in criminal activities, mostly drug trafficking, according to the terrorism report. According to the report, the Colombian government continued to process and investigate demobilized paramilitaries under the Justice and Peace Law, which offers judicial benefits and reduced prison sentences for participants who confess fully to their crimes and return all illicit profits.

The FARC has been weakened significantly by the government's military campaign against it, including the killings of several FARC commanders in 2007 and the group's second in command, Raúl Reyes, during a Colombian government raid on a FARC camp in Ecuador on March 1, 2008. In May 2008, the FARC admitted that its long-time leader, Manuel Marulanda, had died of a heart attack in March. In July 2008, a Colombian military operation rescued 15 long-held hostages, including three U.S. defense contractors held since February 2003 – Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell, and Marc Gonsalves; Colombian Senator and presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt; and other Colombians. In addition, according to the State Department's terrorism

report, Colombian security forces captured or killed a number of mid-level FARC leaders in 2008 and reduced the amount of territory where the FARC could freely operate. Desertions among FARC members also increased in 2008 to more than 3,000 compared to almost 2,500 in 2007.

Nevertheless, according to the terrorism report, the FARC has continued tactical-level terrorist activities, kidnapping for profit (including the holding of 28 political hostages), and narcotrafficking activities. The group launched several bombings against civilian and military targets in urban areas and targeted rural outposts, infrastructure, and political opponents in dozens of attacks.

Colombian terrorist groups continue to utilize the territory of several of Colombia's neighbors, according to the State Department terrorism report. The FARC uses Ecuadorian territory for rest, recuperation, resupply, and training in addition to coca processing and limited planting and production. While Ecuador's relations with Colombia remain tense in the aftermath of Colombia's March 2008 military raid on a FARC camp in Ecuadorian territory, Ecuador's military has increased the number of operations against the FARC in its northern border region. Both the FARC and the ELN and remnants of the AUC often crossed into Venezuelan territory to rest and regroup as well as to extort protection money and kidnap Venezuelans in order to finance their operations. According to the terrorism report, the Venezuelan government did not systematically police the country's 1,400-mile border with Colombia to prevent the movement of armed groups or to interdict the flow of narcotics. Moreover, limited amounts of weapons and ammunition, some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities, reportedly have ended up in the hands of Colombian terrorist groups. In September 2008, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated two senior Venezuelan government officials for materially assisting the narcotics trafficking activities of the FARC. In Panama, the terrorism report maintained that the FARC was active in Panama's Darien province and was reported to have entered several villages in order to steal supplies. Panama's Public Forces were reported to closely monitor the FARC's activities and have captured several FARC members. With regard to Peru, the FARC was reported to use remote areas along the Colombian-Peruvian border to rest, regroup, and make arms purchases.

For additional information, see CRS Report RL32250, *Colombia: Issues for Congress*.

Peru

The brutal Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso or SL) insurgency, which the Department of State has designated as an FTO, was significantly weakened in the 1990s with the capture of its leader Abimael Guzman, who, after a new trial in 2006, was sentenced to life in prison. According to the current State Department terrorism report, there are two SL remnants in Peru operating in the Upper Huallaga River Valley and in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley, which combined were reported to have several hundred armed combatants. Both groups engage in drug trafficking and carried out 64 terrorist acts in 2008, with 31 people killed, including four civilians.

As noted above, the FARC was reported to use remote areas along the Colombian-Peruvian border to rest, regroup, and make arms purchases. According to the State Department terrorism report, experts contend that the FARC continued to fund coca cultivation and cocaine production among the Peruvian population in border areas.

Venezuela

Since May 2006, the Secretary of State has made an annual determination that Venezuela was not “cooperating fully with United States antiterrorism efforts” pursuant to Section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). The most recent determination was made in May 2009. As a result, the United States imposed an arms embargo on Venezuela, which ended all U.S. commercial arms sales and re-transfers to Venezuela. (Other countries currently on the Section 40A list include Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, and Syria, not to be confused with the “state sponsors of terrorism” list under Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act of 1979.)

The State Department’s annual terrorism report maintained that while Venezuela President Hugo Chávez’s ideological sympathy for the FARC and the ELN had limited Venezuelan cooperation with Colombia in combating terrorism, President Chávez publicly changed course in June 2008 and called on the FARC to unconditionally release all hostages, declaring that armed struggle is “out of place” in modern Latin America. In July 2008, the Venezuelan military detained a senior FARC official and handed him over to Colombian authorities. Nevertheless, in September 2008, the Treasury Department designated two senior Venezuelan government officials for assisting the FARC’s drug trafficking activities.

As noted above, the State Department terrorism report stated that the FARC, ELN and remnants of the AUC often crossed into Venezuelan territory to rest and regroup as well as to extort protection money and kidnap Venezuelans in order to finance their operations. The Venezuelan government also did not systematically police its country’s border with Colombia to prevent the movement of armed groups or to interdict the flow of narcotics. Some limited amounts of weapons and ammunition from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities were reported to have ended up in the hands of Colombian terrorist groups.

The State Department terrorism report also cited two other concerns about Venezuela. First, as noted in the past, Venezuelan citizenship, identity, and travel documents remained easy to obtain, making the country a potentially attractive way-station for terrorists. Second, the report noted that passengers on weekly flights connecting Tehran and Damascus with Caracas were only subject to cursory immigration and customs controls in Caracas.

There has been increasing concern in recent years about Iran’s increasing interest in Latin America, particularly its relations with Venezuela under President Hugo Chávez. One reason for the concern is Iran’s ties to the radical Lebanon-based Islamic group Hezbollah (Party of God), which is reported to have been linked to the 1994 bombing of a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires. In June 2008, the Treasury Department announced that it was freezing the U.S. assets of two Venezuelans for providing financial and other support to Hezbollah. In the 110th Congress, the House approved H.Res. 435 (Klein) in November 2007, which expressed concern about Iran’s efforts to expand its influence in Latin America, and noted Venezuela’s increasing cooperation with Iran. (Also see “Iran’s Growing Relations with Latin America” and “Tri-Border Area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay” below.)

In the 111th Congress, the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2010, S. 1390 (Levin), approved July 23, 2009, contains a provision that would require the Director of National Intelligence to provide a report on Venezuela’s military purchases, its potential support for the FARC and Hezbollah, and other Venezuelan activities. On June 10, 2009, the House approved H.R. 2410, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for FY2010 and FY2011, with a provision in section 1011 requiring a report within 90 days on Iran’s and Hezbollah’s actions in

the Western Hemisphere. The provision cited the State Department's 2008 terrorism report that noted the passengers on the weekly flights connecting Tehran and Damascus with Caracas were reportedly subject to only cursory immigration and customs controls in Caracas. In addition, several resolutions and bills related to Venezuela have been introduced: H.R. 375 (Ros-Lehtinen), would, among its provisions, place restrictions on nuclear cooperation with countries assisting the nuclear programs of Venezuela; H.R. 2475 (Ros-Lehtinen) includes a provision identical to that in H.R. 375 described above that would place restrictions on nuclear cooperation with countries assisting the nuclear programs of Venezuela;

For additional information on Venezuela and terrorism concerns, see CRS Report RL32488, *Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy*.

Tri-Border Area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay

In recent years, U.S. concerns have increased over activities of Hezbollah and the Sunni Muslim Palestinian group Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) in the tri-border area (TBA) of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, which has a large Muslim population. The TBA has long been used for arms and drug trafficking, contraband smuggling, document and currency fraud, money laundering, and the manufacture and movement of pirated goods. A 2009 RAND study examines how Hezbollah has benefitted from film piracy proceeds in the tri-border.¹ The State Department terrorism report maintains that the United States remains concerned that Hezbollah and Hamas sympathizers are raising funds among the sizable Middle Eastern communities in the region, but stated that there was no corroborated information that these or other Islamic extremist groups had an operational presence in the area.

Allegations have linked Hezbollah to two bombings in Argentina: the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 30 people and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. In November 2006, an Argentine judge issued arrest warrants in the AMIA case for nine individuals: an internationally wanted Hezbollah militant from Lebanon, Imad Mughniyah, and eight Iranian government officials, including former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani. Interpol subsequently posted a Red Notice for Mughniyah, and in November 2007, its General Assembly voted to approve notices for five of the Iranians wanted by Argentina (not including Rafsanjani). The action had been held up since March 2007, when Iran appealed the decision by Interpol's Executive Committee to issue the notices. In February 2008, Imad Mughniyah was killed by a car bomb in Damascus, Syria. In December 2008, an Argentine judge in a civil suit against the Iranian suspects ordered the attachment of six commercial properties in Argentina owned by a former Iranian cultural attaché who is one of the suspects in the AMIA bombing.

Over the years, the U.S. Congress has continued to express concern about progress in Argentina's investigation of the 1994 AMIA bombing, with the House often passing resolutions on the issue around the time of the anniversary of the bombing on July 18. In the 110th Congress: H.Con.Res. 188 (Ros-Lehtinen), approved by the House by voice vote on July 30, 2007, applauded the Argentine government for increasing the pace of the AMIA investigation, and called upon the General Assembly of Interpol to issue red notices for five Iranians implicated in the bombing: H.Con.Res. 385 (Ros-Lehtinen), approved by the House by voice vote on July 15, 2008,

¹ Gregory F. Treverton et al, *Film Piracy, Organized Crime, and Terrorism*, RAND, 2009.

condemned the AMIA bombing, and urged Western Hemisphere governments to take actions to curb activities that support Hezbollah and other Islamist terrorist organizations. Another resolution, H.Res. 435 (Klein), approved November 5, 2007 by voice vote, expressed concern over the emerging national security implications of Iran's efforts to expand its influence in Latin America, and emphasized the importance of eliminating Hezbollah's financial network in the tri-border area of South America. In the 111th Congress, H.Con.Res. 156 (Ros-Lehtinen), approved July 17, 2009, again condemns the AMIA bombing and urges Western Hemisphere governments to take actions to curb the activities that support Hezbollah and other such extremist groups.

Cuba

Since 1982, the Department of State, pursuant to Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act (EAA) of 1979, has included Cuba among its list of states sponsoring terrorism (the other states currently on the list are Iran, Sudan, and Syria). Communist Cuba had a history of supporting revolutionary movements and governments in Latin America and Africa, but in 1992, then Cuban leader Fidel Castro said that his country's support for insurgents abroad was a thing of the past. Most analysts accept that Cuba's policy generally did change, largely because the breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of billions in subsidies.

The language in the State Department's most recent terrorism report issue in April 2009 is much more tempered than in past versions of the annual report. The report begins by noting that "Cuba no longer actively supports armed struggle in Latin America and other parts of the world." While the report maintains that the Cuban government continued to provide safe haven to several terrorists, such as members of the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA) and Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), it notes that some were in Cuba in connection with peace negotiations with the governments of Spain and Colombia. The report states that Cuba continued to publicly defend the FARC, but also notes that in July 2008 Fidel Castro called on the FARC to release the hostages they were holding without preconditions, and condemned the FARC's mistreatment of captives and of their abduction of civilian politicians who had no role in the armed conflict.

The terrorism report also notes that Cuba continued to permit U.S. fugitives from justice to live legally in Cuba, including members of such militant groups as the Boricua Popular or *Macheteros*, and the Black Liberation Army, but the report also asserts that the Cuban government has not provided safe haven to any new U.S. fugitives wanted for terrorism since 2006. Most of the fugitives living in Cuba entered the country in the 1970s, and are accused of hijacking or committing violent actions in the United States.

Cuba's retention on the terrorism list has been questioned by some observers. In general, those who support keeping Cuba on the list point to the government's history of supporting terrorist acts and armed insurgencies in Latin America and Africa. They point to the government's continued hosting of members of foreign terrorist organizations and U.S. fugitives from justice. Critics of retaining Cuba on the terrorism list maintain that it is a holdover of the Cold War. They argue that domestic political considerations keep Cuba on the terrorism list while North Korea and Libya have been removed, and maintain that Cuba's presence on the list diverts U.S. attention from struggles against serious terrorist threats.

Cuba has called for the United States to surrender Luis Posada Carriles and three Cuban Americans that it accused of plotting to kill Castro and bombing a Cuban airliner in 1976. Most recently, Posada was indicted by a federal grand jury in Texas in April 2009 in which he was

accused, among other things, of lying during immigration proceedings regarding his involvement in bombings in Havana in 1997. Originally a federal trial was set to begin in August 2009, but was rescheduled until February 2010 in order to give him time to prepare his defense. Press reports maintain that Posada is also being investigated by a grand jury in New Jersey for his role in the 1997 bombings in Cuba.²

In the 111th Congress, H.R. 2272 (Rush), introduced May 6, 2009, has a provision that would remove Cuba from the state sponsors of terrorism list.

For additional information on Cuba, see CRS Report R40193, *Cuba: Issues for the 111th Congress*. For background, see CRS Report RL32251, *Cuba and the State Sponsors of Terrorism List*.

Iran's Growing Relations with Latin America

U.S. officials have expressed concerns about Iran's activities in Latin America. In January 2009 congressional testimony, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates maintained that he was concerned about the level of "subversive activity that the Iranians are carrying on in a number of places in Latin America, particularly South America and Central America."³

Venezuela's relations with Iran have been longstanding because they were both founding members of OPEC. Nevertheless, as their relations have intensified over the past several years, U.S. officials and some Members of Congress have expressed concerns. In November 2007, the House approved H.Res. 435 (Klein), expressing concern about Iran's efforts to expand its influence in Latin America, and noting Venezuela's increasing cooperation with Iran. In October 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on an Iranian-owned bank based in Caracas, the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo, C.A. The bank is linked to the Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI), which the Treasury Department asserts has provided or attempted to provide services to Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics.⁴

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has visited Caracas on several occasions since 2006, and President Chávez has visited Iran several times. The personal relationship between the two leaders has driven the strengthening of bilateral ties. The two nations have signed a variety of agreements in agriculture, petrochemicals, oil exploration in the Orinoco region of Venezuela, and the manufacturing of tractors, bicycles, and automobiles. Weekly flights between the two countries began in 2007. In February 5, 2008, testimony before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, then Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Michael McConnell maintained that most cooperation between Iran and Venezuela has been on the economic and energy fronts, but that military cooperation is growing, and the two nations have discussed cooperation on nuclear energy. A major rationale for Iran's recent overtures toward Venezuela is to show that it is not

² Alfonso Chardy and Jay Weaver, "Posada a Target of New Federal Probes," *Miami Herald*, November 12, 2006, and "Grand Jury Indicts Cuban Exile Militant Luis Posada Carriles," *Miami Herald*, January 12, 2007; Jay Weaver, "U.S. Probes Haunt 80-year Old Anti-Castro Cuban," *Houston Chronicle*, March 2, 2008; Jay Weaver, "Posada Gets More Time for Perjury Defense," *Miami Herald*, June 16, 2009.

³ "Senate Armed Services Committee Holds Hearing on Challenges Facing the Defense Department," *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, January 27, 2009.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Export Development Bank of Iran Designated as a Proliferator," October 22, 2008.

isolated diplomatically. Moreover, some observers maintain that Ahmadinejad's increased interest in Venezuela since he came to power in 2005 has been to cause political angst for the United States in its own neighborhood, rather than any real economic interest in Latin America.⁵

In February 2009 testimony, DNI Dennis Blair maintained that Venezuela "is serving as a bridge to help Iran build relations with other Latin American countries."⁶ In recent years, Iran's relations have grown with Bolivia under President Evo Morales, with Ecuador under President Rafael Correa, and with Nicaragua under Daniel Ortega. Iran has promised significant assistance and investment to these countries, but observers maintain that there has been no evidence that such promises have materialized.⁷ Over the past several years under President Ahmadinejad, Iran has opened embassies in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Uruguay, in addition to having existing embassies in Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela.⁸

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon has said that one of the concerns about Iran's increasing interest in Latin America is its ties to Hezbollah. According to Shannon, "What worries us is Iran's history of activities in the region and especially its links to Hezbollah and the terrorist attack that took place in Buenos Aires [in 1994]."⁹ As noted above, an Argentine judge issued arrest warrants in the AMIA case in November 2008 for eight Iranian government officials, including former Iranian President Rafsanjani. Moreover, in June 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced that it was freezing the U.S. assets of two Venezuelans – Ghazi Nasr al Din (a Venezuelan diplomat serving in Lebanon) and Fawzi Kan'an – for providing financial and other support to Hezbollah. U.S. citizens are also prohibited in engaging in any transactions with the two Venezuelans, including any business with two travel agencies in Caracas owned by Kan'an.¹⁰

In March 2009 congressional testimony, Admiral James G. Stavridis, then commander of the U.S. Southern Command, also asserted that the main concern about Iran's increased activity in Latin America is its links to Hezbollah. He maintained that there was Hezbollah activity throughout South America, particularly the TBA of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay as well as parts of Brazil and in the Caribbean Basin.¹¹

As noted above, on June 10, 2009, the House approved H.R. 2410, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for FY2010 and FY2011, with a provision in section 1011 requiring a report within 90 days on Iran's and Hezbollah's actions in the Western Hemisphere. The provision cited the State Department's 2008 terrorism report that noted the passengers on the weekly flights connecting Tehran and Damascus with Caracas were reportedly subject to only cursory

⁵ Farideh Farhi, Public Policy Scholar, Woodrow Wilson Center, comments at conference on "Iran and Latin America: Threat or Axis of Annoyance?" Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C. July 10, 2008.

⁶ Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," February 12, 2009.

⁷ For example, see: Kavon "Hak" Hakimzadeh, "Iran & Venezuela: The Axis of Annoyance," *Military Review*, May 1, 2009; and Anne-Marie O'Connor and Mary Beth Sheridan, "Iran's Invisible Nicaragua Embassy; Feared Stronghold Never Materialized," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2009.

⁸ Anne-Marie O'Connor and Mary Beth Sheridan, "Iran's Invisible Nicaragua Embassy; Feared Stronghold Never Materialized," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2009.

⁹ Andres Oppenheimer, "Beware Iran in Latin America," *Miami Herald*, September 30, 2007.

¹⁰ "Treasury Targets Hizballah in Venezuela," *States News Service*, June 18, 2008.

¹¹ Senate Armed Services Committee, Hearing to Receive Testimony on the U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Africa Command, and U.S. Transportation Command, March 17, 2009.

immigration and customs controls in Caracas. The provision also stated that Iran has sought to strengthen ties with several Western Hemisphere countries in order to undermine U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. Policy

As in other parts of the world, the United States has assisted Latin American and Caribbean nations over the years in their struggle against terrorist or insurgent groups indigenous to the region. For example, in the 1980s, the United States supported the government of El Salvador with significant economic and military assistance in its struggle against a leftist guerrilla insurgency. In recent years, the United States has employed various policy tools to combat terrorism in the Latin America and Caribbean region, including sanctions, anti-terrorism assistance and training, law enforcement cooperation, and multilateral cooperation through the OAS. Moreover, given the nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking, one can argue that assistance aimed at combating drug trafficking organizations in the region has also been a means of combating terrorism by cutting off a source of revenue for terrorist organizations. The same argument can be made regarding efforts to combat money laundering in the region.

Although terrorism was not the main focus of U.S. policy toward the region in recent years, attention increased in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Anti-terrorism assistance has increased along with bilateral and regional cooperation against terrorism. Congress approved the Bush Administration's request in 2002 to expand the scope of U.S. assistance to Colombia beyond a counternarcotics focus to also include counterterrorism assistance to the government in its military efforts against drug-financed leftist guerrillas and rightist paramilitaries. Border security with Mexico also became a prominent issue in bilateral relations, with attention focused on the potential transit of terrorists through Mexico to the United States.

The United States has imposed sanctions on three groups in Colombia (ELN, FARC, and AUC) and one group in Peru (SL) designated by the Department of State as FTOs. Official designation of such groups as FTOs triggers a number of sanctions, including visa restrictions and the blocking of any funds of these groups in U.S. financial institutions. The designation also has the effect of increasing public awareness about these terrorist organizations and the concerns that the United States has about them. As noted above, the United States has included Cuba on its list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1982, pursuant to section 6(j) of the EAA, and both Cuba and Venezuela are currently on the annual Section 40A AECA list of countries that are not cooperating fully with U.S. antiterrorism efforts, lists that trigger a number of sanctions.

The United States provides assistance to improve Latin American countries' counterterrorism capabilities through several types of programs administered by the Department of State, including: an Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program, an Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program, a Counterterrorism Financing (CTF) program, and a Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP). All the programs are funded through the Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) foreign aid funding account.

The largest of these program is the ATA program that over the years has provided training and equipment to Latin American countries to help improve their capabilities in such areas as airport security management, hostage negotiations, bomb detection and deactivation, and countering terrorism financing. Such training was expanded to Argentina in the aftermath of the two

bombings in 1992 and 1994. Assistance was also stepped up in 1997 to Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay in light of increased U.S. concern over illicit activities in the tri-border area of those countries. In recent years, ATA for Western Hemisphere countries amounted to \$9.1 million in FY2008 and an estimated \$9.3 million in FY2009. For FY2010, the Administration requested \$16.4 million for Latin American countries, with \$6 million for Mexico, \$4.4 million for Colombia, and \$6 million for assistance to other countries through a regional program. The FY2010 budget request states that ATA assistance for Central and South America enhances border control and provides fraudulent document training.

The EXBS program helps countries develop export and border control systems in order to prevent states and terrorist organizations from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and destabilizing conventional weapons. Latin American countries received \$7.1 million in EXBS assistance in FY2008 and an estimated \$2.1 million in FY2009. The FY2010 request is for \$2.9 million for assistance to Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Panama, and a regional program.

CTF assistance provides support in detecting, isolating, and dismantling terrorist financial networks. No CTF assistance was provided for Latin America in FY2008, while in FY2009, an estimated \$225,000 was provided. The FY2010 request is for \$875,000, with assistance for Mexico, Colombia, and a regional program.

TIP assistance helps foreign immigration authorities with a computer database system that enables identification of suspected terrorists attempting to transit air, land or sea ports of entry. No assistance was provided to the region in FY2008 or FY2009, but for FY2010 the Administration requested \$1.3 million for a Western Hemisphere regional program.

A number of Latin American countries participate in U.S.-government port security programs administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Energy. The Container Security Initiative (CSI) operated by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection of DHS uses a security regime to ensure that all containers that pose a potential risk for terrorism are identified and inspected at foreign ports before they are placed on vessels destined for the United States. Ten Latin American ports in Argentina, the Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, and Panama participate in the CSI program. The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration administers the Megaports Initiative, a program which involves deploying radiation detection equipment in order to deter, detect, and interdict illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials. To date, the Megaports Initiative is operational in ports in the Bahamas, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama.

The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has partnered with several Latin American countries to establish Trade Transparency Units that facilitate exchanges of information in order to combat trade-based money laundering. To date, TTUs have been established in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, and Mexico.

The United States also works closely with the governments of the tri-border area—Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay—through the “3+1 regional cooperation mechanism,” established in 2002 to serve as a forum for counterterrorism cooperation and prevention among all four countries. Argentina hosted the fifth plenary session of the 3+1 mechanism in December 2006 that focused on such issues as early warning among states, information exchange in order to prevent illegal activity, and the denial of refuge to those who finance, plan, or commit acts of terrorism. The

seventh plenary meeting of the 3+1 group is supposed to take place in the United States in 2009, but no specific date has been set.

Increased Regional Cooperation Since 9/11

Latin American nations strongly condemned the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and took action through the OAS and the Rio Treaty to strengthen hemispheric cooperation against terrorism. The OAS, which happened to be meeting in Peru at the time, swiftly condemned the attacks, reiterated the need to strengthen hemispheric cooperation to combat terrorism, and expressed full solidarity with the United States. At a special session on September 19, 2001, OAS members invoked the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, also known as the Rio Treaty, which obligates signatories to the treaty to come to one another's defense in case of outside attack. Another resolution approved on September 21, 2001, called on Rio Treaty signatories to "use all legally available measures to pursue, capture, extradite, and punish those individuals" involved in the attacks and to "render additional assistance and support to the United States, as appropriate, to address the September 11 attacks, and also to prevent future terrorist acts."

In the aftermath of 9/11, OAS members reinvigorated effort of the of the Inter-American Committee on Terrorism (CICTE) to combat terrorism in the hemisphere. The CICTE has cooperated on border security mechanisms, controls to prevent terrorist funding, and law enforcement and counterterrorism intelligence and information. At a January 2003 CICTE meeting, OAS members issued the Declaration of San Salvador, which pledged to strengthen hemispheric cooperation through a variety of border, customs, and financial control measures. At the February 2005 CICTE session held in Trinidad and Tobago, OAS members reaffirmed their commitment to deepen cooperation against terrorism and addressed threats to aviation, seaport, and cyber security. CICTE's seventh regular session in Panama in February/March 2007 focused on the protection of critical infrastructure in the region. In March 2008, CICTE's eighth regular session held in Washington D.C. focused on cyber security, document security and fraud prevention, and port security. Most recently, CICTE's ninth regular session held in Washington, D.C. focused on the topic of strengthening border controls.

OAS members signed the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism in June 2002. The Convention, among other measures, improves regional cooperation against terrorism, commits parties to sign and ratify U.N. anti-terrorism instruments and take actions against the financing of terrorism, and denies safe haven to suspected terrorists. President Bush submitted the Convention to the Senate on November 12, 2002, for its advice and consent, and the treaty was referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Treaty Doc. 107-18). In the 109th Congress, the committee formally reported the treaty on July 28, 2005 (Senate Exec. Rept. 109-3), and on October 7, 2005, the Senate agreed to the resolution of advice and consent. The United States deposited its instruments of ratification for the Convention on November 15, 2005.

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